

# Stewardship Notes

Indiana Division of Forestry

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## Cost Share Assistance

Your forestland is an important natural resource.

Yet, if you're like many landowners, you may not be reaping the full benefits of owning a woodland, or providing adequate long-term protection for the forest.

Does your forest provide maximum watershed protection and erosion control? Are there abundant, healthy populations of wildlife? Do timber harvests provide maximum yields? If not, you may qualify for cost share assistance through federal programs geared toward improving private forests. The Forest Improvement Program (FIP) is concerned with the supply of wood products. The Forest Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) encourages stewardship of privately owned woodlands. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is intended to convert environmentally sensitive land, which may include farm land in row crop production, to forest land. All programs require the landowner to follow a stewardship plan approved by a district forester, and participate in the program for at least 10 years.

To inquire about these programs, contact the Farm Services Agency (FSA) office or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in the county where your land is located, or contact your District Forester. If your land qualifies, a District Forester will assess your needs, suggest a program and management strategy, provide guidelines and determine your maximum refundable cost.

### What Can Be Cost Shared?

Practices covered under these programs include timber stand improvement, tree planting, critical area stabilization, certain fencing and some wildlife management practices.

Component parts for which you may be reimbursed include:

- plantation site preparation
- nursery stock
- tree planting
- weed control
- cull tree removal
- crop tree release
- pre-commercial thinning
- pruning
- vine control
- site preparation for natural regeneration

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## **Tree Planting**

If trees are planted for windbreaks, reforestation, future timber harvest or erosion control, you may qualify for cost-share assistance. For qualified landowners, FIP and SIP may refund up to 50% of planting costs. The CRP offers a 50% refund for initial costs and an annual crop rental fee for the required 10- or 15-year duration of the program. Under SIP, at least 1 acre of trees must be planted, while FIP requires at least 10 acres.

Refundable cost limits for all programs are determined by a District Forester or personnel from the FSA office. For any tree planting, a professional forester should be contacted for technical assistance.

## **Timber Stand Improvement**

Timber stand improvement, or TSI, focuses on the future supply of wood products. Generally, trees grow faster and straighter if they are grown as a crop. This requires vine control, weed tree removal, thinning, site preparation for natural regeneration and pruning. Your woods will also be more productive and profitable. Under SIP and FIP, the landowner may be refunded up to 50% of the cost for TSI. TSI work must be done on at least 10 acres to qualify.

## **Critical Area Planting**

Critical areas include forest roads or other areas with erosion problems. If you plant trees, legumes or grasses to stabilize these areas, you may be eligible for a 50% refund. The NRCS has the technical responsibility for this practice. Your District Forester can provide information on erosion control, logging roads and skid trails.

## **Implementation**

To participate in a cost-share program, the landowner may do the work, or hire a consultant forester. Landowners who choose to do the work themselves should follow the direction of their District Forester.

If a consultant is hired, be aware that the maximum allowable financial assistance will not change. You will be paid 50% of the cost approved by the District Forester or the FSA. If a consultant charges more than this, your refund will not increase. For your own protection, verify the actual project cost before starting. Upon completion, the landowner,

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not the FSA office, must pay the consultant. You will be reimbursed by the FSA or the District Forester upon receipt of your bill.

You may wish to receive financial help for several forestry projects or for a project which will cost more than the maximum allowable refund. If so, ask about Long Term Agreements.

### **More Forest Management Questions?**

If you have any forest management questions or need technical assistance, help is available from:

- Consultant foresters
- your District Forester
- NRCS personnel
- FSA personnel
- Purdue Extension Office

The FSA and NRCS offices can be found in the telephone book under U.S. Government Offices, Agriculture Department.

Applications for cost share assistance are available at your county Farm Services Agency (FSA) office, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or from your District Forester or the Division of Forestry office